

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for alerting a user to the existence of information, comprising:

5 receiving means for receiving input information supplied by a user;

10 comparing means for comparing information supplied by the user with information stored in storing means; and alerting means for alerting a user when the comparing means determines that information related to information received by the receiving means is stored by the storing means.

15 2. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiving means is arranged to receive the input information as information relating to words supplied by the user.

20 3. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiving means comprises a keystroke receiver for receiving input information supplied by a user as keystroke information representing keystrokes made by a user on a keyboard.

25 4. Apparatus according to claim 3, wherein the keystroke receiver comprises a keyboard hook for

obtaining keystroke information as keystroke messages from a computer operating system.

5 5. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiving means is arranged to filter out or ignore input information that does not represent or relate to a character for forming a word.

10 6. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiving means is arranged to store information relating to received input information.

15 7. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the receiving means is arranged to store information relating to received input information and to pass stored information to the comparing means when information relating to at least a predetermined number of characters has been stored.

20 8. Apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the receiving means is arranged to add received information to already stored information when the received information relates to or represents a character for forming a word.

25 9. Apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the receiving means is arranged to delete all stored

information in response to receipt of input information representing or relating to the start of a new word.

10. Apparatus according to claim 6, wherein the
5 receiving means is arranged to delete the last stored information in response to receipt of input information representing or relating to deletion of a character.

11. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the
10 comparing means is arranged to compare information supplied by the user with keywords stored in the storing means.

12. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the alerting
15 means is arranged to provide at least one of an audible and a visual alert to a user.

13. Apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the alerting
20 means is arranged to provide a visual alert by causing a portion of a display screen to change, for example to flash or change colour.

14. Apparatus comprising processor means programmed by
25 program instructions to provide apparatus in accordance with claim 1.

15. Apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the processor means has access to applications software and the receiving means is arranged to receive information input by the user to an application being implemented by the processor means.

16. Apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising a user interface having input means for enabling a user to input information and output means for supplying information to a user.

17. Apparatus according to claim 16, wherein the input means comprises a keyboard and the output means comprises a display.

18. Apparatus according to claim 1, further comprising coupling means for enabling a user to be coupled to a source of further information over a network when the comparing means determines that information related to information received by the receiving means is stored by the storing means.

19. Information processing apparatus, comprising a user interface comprising a keyboard for enabling a user to input information, a display for displaying information to the user, a data store for storing keywords and a processor having associated memory, the processor being

configured by program instructions to provide an information alerter for alerting a user to the existence of information, comprising:

an icon displayer for displaying an information alerter icon on top of an applications window displayed on the display;

a keystroke receiver for receiving keystroke information relating to keystrokes made by the user to input information into an applications window displayed by the display;

a keyword comparer for comparing keywords stored in the data store with keystroke information received by the keystroke receiver; and

a user alerter for causing at least a part of the alerter icon to change when the keyword comparer identifies at least one keyword corresponding to information input to an application as keystrokes by the user.

20. Apparatus according to Claim 19, wherein the user alerter is arranged to cause at least a part of the alerter icon to change colour or to flash.

21. Apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising a selector and a coupler for coupling the user to a source of information related to a keyword identified by

the keyword comparer when a user selects said at least part of the icon using the selector.

22. Apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said icon
5 displayer is arranged to display a drop down list
consisting of the identified keyword or keywords when a
user selects said at least part of the icon using the
selector.

10 23. Apparatus according to claim 22, wherein the coupler
is arranged to couple the apparatus to a source of
information when the user selects a keyword from the drop
down list using the selector.

15 24. Apparatus according to claim 21, wherein the coupler
is arranged to couple the apparatus to a computer
providing a source of information over a network.

20 25. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the
keystroke receiver comprises a keyboard hook for
obtaining keystroke information as keystroke messages
from an operating system of the processor.

25 26. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the
keystroke receiver is arranged to filter out or ignore
any keystroke that does not represent or relate to a
character for forming a word.

27. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the keystroke receiver is arranged to store information relating to received keystrokes.

5 28. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the keystroke receiver is arranged to store information relating to received keystrokes and to pass stored keystroke information to the keyword comparer means when information relating to at least a predetermined number
10 of keystrokes has been stored.

29. Apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the keystroke receiver is arranged to add received keystroke information to already stored keystroke information when
15 the received information relates to or represents a character for forming a word.

30. Apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the keystroke receiver is arranged to delete all stored
20 keystroke information in response to receipt of keystroke information representing activation of a key such as the spacebar, full stop or other punctuation mark key representing or relating to the start of a new word.

25 31. Apparatus according to claim 27, wherein the keystroke receiver is arranged to delete the last stored keystroke information in response to receipt of keystroke

information representing activation of a key such as a backspace key relating to deletion of a character.

5 32. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the user alerter is arranged to provide an audible alert to a user.

10 33. Apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising an information receiver for receiving information from an information provider, wherein the user alerter is arranged to cause a part of the alerter icon to change to alert a user to incoming information from an information provider unrelated to information supplied by the user.

15 34. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the icon displayer is arranged to display as the information alerter icon an icon having different buttons for alerting a user to different types of information corresponding to identified keywords and the user alerter
20 is arranged to cause the button associated with a particular type of information to change when a keyword associated with that type of information is identified.

25 35. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein the icon displayer is arranged to display as the information alerter icon an icon having a button for alerting a user to information corresponding to an identified keyword and

the user alerter is arranged to cause the button to change when a keyword is identified and wherein an information receiver is provided for receiving information from an information provider and the user alerter is arranged to cause another button of the alerter icon to change to alert a user to incoming information from an information provider unrelated to information supplied by the user.

36. Apparatus according to claim 19, wherein an information receiver is provided for receiving information from an information provider and the icon displayer is arranged to display as the information alerter icon an icon having a drop down menu arranged to display video information received by the information receiver.

37. Apparatus for providing a user interface, comprising: display causing means for causing an information alert to be displayed on a display in response to a user supplying information corresponding to stored information.

38. Apparatus according to Claim 37, wherein the display causing means comprises first means for causing an information alert region to be displayed on the display and second means for causing at least a part of the

information alert region to change in response to a user supplying information corresponding to stored information.

5 39. Apparatus according to Claim 38, wherein the second means is arranged to cause different parts of the alerter region to change dependent on type information associated with the stored information.

10 40. Apparatus according to claim 38, wherein the second means is arranged to cause at least part of the information alerter region to change in response to receipt of information from an information provider.

15 41. Apparatus for providing a user interface for information processing apparatus having a keyboard for enabling a user to input information, a display for displaying the user interface, a data store for storing keywords and a processor configurable by program
20 instructions to provide an operating system for controlling operation of the apparatus and enabling running of applications software by the processor in windows displayed on the display, the apparatus comprising:

25 an icon displayer for displaying an information alerter icon on top of an applications window; and a user alerter for causing at least a part of the alerter icon

to change when information input to an application as keystrokes by the user corresponds to a keyword stored in the data store.

5 42. Apparatus according to Claim 41, wherein the icon
displayer is arranged to display the alerter icon as a
plurality of buttons and the user alerter is arranged to
cause different ones of the button to change for
different types of information.

10 43. Apparatus according to claim 41, wherein the icon
displayer is arranged to display as the information
alerter icon an icon having a drop down menu arranged to
display video information.

15 44. A method of controlling apparatus to alert a user to
the existence of information, comprising the steps of:
receiving input information supplied by a user;
comparing information supplied by the user with
20 information stored in storing means; and
alerting a user when information related to received
information is stored by the storing means.

25 45. A method according to claim 44, wherein the
receiving step receives the input information as
information relating to words supplied by the user.

46. A method according to claim 44, wherein the receiving step receives input information supplied by a user as keystroke information representing keystrokes made by a user on a keyboard.

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47. A method according to claim 46, wherein the receiving step obtains keystroke information as keystroke messages from a computer operating system.

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48. A method according to claim 44, wherein the receiving step filters out or ignores input information that does not represent or relate to a character for forming a word.

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49. A method according to claim 44, wherein the receiving step stores information relating to received input information.

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50. A method according to claim 44, wherein the receiving step stores information relating to received input information and passes stored information for comparison in the comparing step when information relating to at least a predetermined number of characters has been stored.

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51. A method according to claim 49, wherein the receiving step adds received information to already

stored information when the received information relates to or represents a character for forming a word.

5 52. A method according to claim 49, wherein the receiving step deletes all stored information in response to receipt of input information representing or relating to the start of a new word.

10 53. A method according to claim 49, wherein the receiving step deletes the last stored information in response to receipt of input information representing or relating to deletion of a character.

15 54. A method according to claim 44, wherein the comparing step compares information supplied by the user with keywords stored in the storing means.

20 55. A method according to claim 44, wherein the alerting step provides at least one of an audible and a visual alert to a user.

25 56. A method according to claim 44, wherein the alerting step provides a visual alert by causing a portion of a display screen to change, for example to flash or change colour.

57. A method comprising programming processor means using program instructions to carry out a method in accordance with claim 44.

5 58. A method according to claim 57, which comprises providing the processor means with access to applications software and wherein the receiving step receives information input by the user to an application being implemented by the processor means.

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59. A method according to claim 44, further comprising coupling a user to a source of further information over a network when information related to information received by the receiving means is stored by the storing means.

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60. A method of operating an information processing apparatus comprising a user interface comprising a keyboard for enabling a user to input information, a display for displaying information to the user, a data store for storing keywords and a processor having associated memory, the method comprising causing the processor to carry out the steps of:

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displaying an information alerter icon on top of an applications window displayed on the display;

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receiving keystroke information relating to
keystrokes made by the user to input information into an
applications window displayed by the display;

comparing keywords stored in the data store with
5 keystroke information received by the keystroke receiver
to identify any keyword related to the received keystroke
information; and

10 alerting a user by causing at least a part of the
alerter icon to change when received keystroke
information corresponds to a stored keyword.

61. A method according to Claim 60, wherein the user
alerting step causes at least a part of the alerter icon
to change colour or to flash.

15 62. A method according to claim 60, further comprising
the step of coupling the user to a source of information
related to an identified keyword when a user selects said
at least part of the icon.

20 63. A method according to claim 62, which comprises the
further step of displaying a drop down list consisting of
the identified keyword or keywords when a user selects
said at least part of the icon.

64. A method according to claim 63, wherein the coupling step couples to a source of information when the user selects a keyword from the drop down list.

5 65. A method according to claim 62, wherein the coupling step couples to a computer providing a source of information over a network.

10 66. A method according to claim 60, wherein the receiving step obtains keystroke information as keystroke messages from an operating system of the processor.

15 67. A method according to claim 60, wherein the receiving step filters out or ignores any keystroke that does not represent or relate to a character for forming a word.

20 68. A method according to claim 60, wherein the receiving step stores information relating to received keystrokes.

25 69. A method according to claim 60, wherein the receiving step stores information relating to received keystrokes and passes stored keystroke information on for comparison in the comparing step when information relating to at least a predetermined number of keystrokes has been stored.

70. A method according to claim 68, wherein the receiving step adds received keystroke information to already stored keystroke information when the received information relates to or represents a character for forming a word.

71. A method according to claim 68, wherein the receiving step deletes all stored keystroke information in response to receipt of keystroke information representing activation of a key such as the spacebar, full stop or other punctuation mark key representing or relating to the start of a new word.

72. A method according to claim 68, wherein the receiving step deletes the last stored keystroke information in response to receipt of keystroke information representing activation of a key such as a backspace key relating to deletion of a character.

73. A method according to claim 60, wherein the user alerting step provides an audible alert to a user.

74. A method according to claim 60, further comprising a step of receiving information from an information provider, wherein the user alerting step causes a part of the alerter icon to change to alert a user to incoming

information from an information provider unrelated to information supplied by the user.

5 75. A method according to claim 60, wherein the icon displaying step displays as the information alerter icon an icon having different buttons for alerting a user to different types of information corresponding to identified keywords and the user alerting step causes the button associated with a particular type of information to change when a keyword associated with that type of information is identified.

10 76. A method according to claim 60, wherein the icon displaying step displays as the information alerter icon an icon having a button for alerting a user to information corresponding to an identified keyword and the user alerting step causes the button to change when a keyword is identified and wherein the method further comprises a step of receiving information from an information provider and the user alerting step causes another button of the alerter icon to change to alert a user to incoming information from an information provider unrelated to information supplied by the user.

20 77. A method according to claims 60, further comprising the step of receiving information from an information provider and wherein the icon displaying step displays as

the information alerter icon an icon having a drop down menu arranged to display video information received by the information receiver.

5 78. A method of providing a user interface, comprising:
the step of causing an information alert to be displayed
on a display in response to a user supplying information
corresponding to stored information.

10 79. A method according to Claim 37, wherein the step of
causing an information alert to be displayed comprises a
first step of causing an information alert region to be
displayed on the display and a second step of causing at
least a part of the information alert region to change in
15 response to a user supplying information corresponding to
stored information.

20 80. A method according to Claim 79, wherein the second
step causes different parts of the alerter region to
change dependent on type information associated with the
stored information.

25 81. A method according to claim 79, wherein the second
step causes at least part of the information alerter
region to change in response to receipt of information
from an information provider.

82. A method for providing a user interface for information processing apparatus having a keyboard for enabling a user to input information, a display for displaying the user interface, a data store for storing keywords and a processor, the method comprising causing the processor to carry out the steps of:

displaying an information alerter icon on top of an applications window displayed on the display; and

alerting a user by causing at least a part of the alerter icon to change when information input to an application as keystrokes by the user corresponds to a keyword stored in the data store.

83. A method according to Claim 82, wherein the icon displaying step displays the alerter icon as a plurality of buttons and the user alerting step causes different ones of the button to change for different types of information.

84. A method according to claim 82, wherein the icon displaying step displays as the information alerter icon an icon having a drop down menu arranged to display video information.

85. A signal carrying program instructions or code for causing a processor to carry out a method in accordance with claim 44.

86. A storage medium carrying program instructions or code for causing a processor to carry out a method in accordance with claim 44.